ABSTRACT

An Internet access device employs a method for managing electronic mail messages for multiple users of the device. When one user retrieves his or her messages over a distributed computer network, such as the Internet, the device also retrieves status information regarding the remaining users' unread email messages. This enables the device to inform the other users as to their unread email. A computer-readable storage medium for storing data for access by a computer program being executed on a user interface device includes at least two data structures. A first data structure stored on the medium provides for retrieving electronic mail messages addressed to one of the users. A second data structure stored on said medium provides for retrieving status information regarding any unread electronic mail messages addressed to any remaining users. A system containing a user interface for recipients of electronic mail messages includes a processing unit, system memory, an I/O device, a system bus and an email program module. The system bus couples together the processing unit, system memory, and input/output device. The electronic mail program module is stored in the system memory and is operative to retrieve over a distributed computer network electronic mail messages addressed one of the users, as well as to retrieve status information regarding any unread electronic mail messages addressed to any other users.